

Message Text

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AMCONSUL KARACHI

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AMCONSUL LAHORE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 8354

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJ: PAKISTAN QUARTERLY INTERNAL POLITICAL ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO CONTINUES HIS ONE-MAN DOMINANCE OF PAKISTAN. DISSATISFACTION WITH HIS POLICIES AND METHODS IS SUBSTANTIAL, BUT THIS DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE AT PRESENT TO HIS CONTINUED CONTROL. EVEN AMONG THOSE WHO ARE DISPLEASED WITH THE DIRECTIONS BHUTTO HAS TAKEN, THERE REMAINS HOPE THAT HE AND HE ALONE CAN SOMEHOW TURN THINGS AROUND AND MANAGE PAKISTAN'S MANY PROBLEMS TO THEIR SATISFACTION. IN THE LONGER TERM, HE FACES GREATER POLTNTIAL DANGERS, PARTICULARLY ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT, ALREADY A SIGNFICANT SOURCE OF DISSATISFACTION. FAILURE TO SOLVE THE INSURGENCY PROBLEM IN BALUCHISTAN ALSO CONSTITUTE A LONG-RUN DANGER FOR THE PRIME MINISTER. THIS REPORT PREPARED WITH HELP OF THOUGHFUL CONTRIBUTIONS FROM CONSULATES. END SUMMARY.

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1. PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO CONTINUES HIS ONE-MAN DOMINANCE OF PAKISTAN. ALTHOUGH HE MUST, LIKE ANY OTHER POLITICIAN, OPERATE WITHIN LIMITS BROADLY DEFINED BY PUBLIC OPINION AND THE REALITIES OF THE POWER STRUCTURE, HIS WORD IS THE DETERMINANT OVER A WIDE RANGE OF SUBJECTS FROM HIGH INTERNATIONAL POLICY TO MINOR APPOINTMENTS IN GOVERNMENT AND PARTY. HIS ENERGY AND THRUST FOR POWER ARE UNDIMINISHED, AND HIS ACTIVITIES SEEM UNCONSTRAINED EITHER BY THE PROVISIONS ON PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY WHICH FORM A KEY PART OF PAKISTAN'S CONSTITUTION OR BY ANY HIGH SENSIBILITY ON HIS PART WITH RESPECT TO DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES IN THE COUNTRY.

2. DISSATISFACTION WITH BHUTTO'S POLICIES AND METHODS IS SUBSTANTIAL AND MANY OF HIS ACHIEVEMENTS SEEM TO BE LOST SIGHT OF IN THE SPATE OF CURRENT GRIEVANCES. THE SHORTCOMINGS OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC PROGRAMS ARE THE TARGET OF WIDESPREAD CRITICISM. PAKISTAN'S RAMPANT INFLATION--THE COST OF LIVING ROSE ABOUT 30 PERCENT IN FY 74 AND DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE ABATED IN THE FIRST TWO MONTHS OF FY75--IS A SOURCE OF WELL-NIGH UNIVERSAL COMPLAINT. CRITICISM OF AGRICULTURAL PROCUREMENT POLICIES, THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LAND AND INDUSTRIAL REFORMS, THE OPERATION OF NATIONALIZED INDUSTRIES, COTTON EXPORT PROGRAMS, AND THE FERTILIZER POSITION IS FREQUENTLY MET.

3. ON THE POLITICAL SIDE, THE TIGHTENING OF CONTROLS OVER THE MEDIA (DRAMATIZED DURING THE PERIOD BY THE SHUTDOWN OF THE OUTSPEKENLY CRITICAL WEEKLY OUTLOOK) HAS DISILLUSIONED INTELLECTUALS, INCLUDING SOME WHO HAD ACTIVELY SUPPORTED BHUTTO'S RISE TO POWER, ALTHOUGH IT IS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT OUTLOOK'S OPPOSITION TO PPP HAS BEEN RABID AND UNRELENTING. THE STATE OF AFFAIRS IN THE RULING PPP HAS ALSO DAMAGED BHUTTO'S STANDING, PARTICULARLY IN THE PUNJAB. DESPITE THE PM'S EFFORTS TO CONTROL THE SITUATION THERE, GROUPISM (INCLUDING THE RESIDUAL INFLUENCE OF OUSTED CHIEF MUSTAFA KHAR) AND THE SCRAMBLE FOR PARTY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT POSITIONS HAVE UNDERSCORED THE INTERNAL WEAKNESSES OF PPP. THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE AHMADIYA DISTURBANCES, ITS HEAVY-HANDED MOVES AGAINST NWFP DISSIDENTS, AND THE CONTINUING VIOLENCE IN BALUCHISTAN WERE FURTHER TARGETS OF CRITICISM. ALEGATIONS OF ADMINISTRATIVE CORRUPTION ALSO CONTINUE.

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4. THE DISSATISFACTION WITH BHUTTO'S HANDLING OF AFFAIRS DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE AT PRESENT TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S CONTINUED CONTROL. HE STILL RETAINS A WIDESPREAD MEASURE OF POPULAR SUPPORT. IF SOME FOLLOWERS HAVE LEFT THE BHUTTO BANDWAGON IN DISILLUSION (OR BECAUSE THEY WERE PUSHED), IT REMAINS CROWDED WITH NEWER ARRIVALS WHO HAVE FOUND IT TO THEIR INTEREST TO MAKE THEIR PEACE WITH POWER OR HAVE REASON TO BE MORE SATISFIED WITH THE PRIME MINISTER'S POLICIES THAN

THEY HAD EXPECTED TO BE. BHUTTO'S CONTROL OVER THE BUREAUCRACY, INTERLARDERED WITH HIS OWN POLITICAL FOLLOWERS, REMAINS SURE. WHAT WE KNOW OF MILITARY ATTITUDES SUGGEST THAT WHILE THE MILITARY APPRECIATE BHUTTO'S EFFORTS TO EQUIP THEM WITH MORE CREDIBLE ARMAMENTS AND ENDORSE HIS HITHERTO MODERATE STAND ON THE AHMADIYA ISSUE, THEY ARE SUSPICIOUS OF LEFTIST INFLUENCES IN HIS ENTOURAGE. BUT THEY HAVE NO PRESENT INCLINATION TO RETURN TO THE POLITICAL ROLE THEY LEFT IN DISARRAY IN DECEMBER 1971.

5. EVEN AMONG THOSE WHO ARE DISPLEASED WITH THE DIRECTIONS BHUTTO HAS TAKEN, THERE REMAINS HOPE THAT HE AND HE ALONE CAN SOMEHOW TURN THINGS AROUND AND MANAGE PAKISTAN'S MANY PROBLEMS TO THEIR SATISFACTION. TO THESE PEOPLE, AND TO MANY OTHERS IN PAKISTAN TODAY, THERE SIMPLY SEEMS NO REAL ALTERNATIVE TO BHUTTO. PERHAPS THAT IS HIS GREATEST STRENGTH.

6. THERE CERTAINLY SEEM NEITHER CHALLENGERS NOR EVEN VIABLE REPLACEMENTS WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY. HIS CABINET, REDUCED IN SIZE NOW TO TWO-THIRDS ITS ORIGINAL SIZE, IS A LACKLUSTER GROUP WITH LIMITED POLITICAL BASES. A LONG AWAITED REVAMPING IS EXPECTED IN SEPTEMBER. THE RELATIVE EASE WITH WHICH BHUTTO DISMISSED J.A. RAHIM IN JULY SUGGESTS THAT HE COULD PROBABLY HAVE MOST OF THE OTHERS WALK THE PLANK WITHOUT SERIOUS POLITICAL DIFFICULTY, ALTHOUGH HE WOULD HAVE TO ASSURE THAT REASONABLE IDEOLOGICAL AND REGIONAL BALANCE WAS MAINTAINED. THE PRESENT PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP SEEMS EQUALLY DEPENDENT ON THE PRIME MINISTER.

7. NOR CAN THE OPPOSITION PARTIES PROVIDE ANY EFFECTIVE RALLYING POINT. ALTHOUGH SOME OF THEM ARE INDIVIDUALLY STRONG WITHIN LIMITED CONSTITUENCIES--THEJAMAAT-I-ISLAMI RETAINS ITS OVERPOWERING STRENGTH AMONG PUNJABI STUDENTS AS WELL AS AMONG THEOCRATS, THE TEHRIK-I-ISTIQLAL'S POPULARITY MAY BE GROWING, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND THE NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY MAINTAINS AND MAY HAVE ENHANCED ITS REGIONAL BASES IN THE FRONTIER AND BALUCHISTAN--THEY SHOW LITTLE COHESION AS A GROUP. LEADERS OF THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT SPEAK BRAVELY OF CONTESTING AGAINST THE PPP IN STRAIGHT FIGHTS SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT DECIDE ON EARLY ELECTIONS (RUMORS THAT IT WILL DO SO PERSIST DESPITE OFFICIAL DENIALS), BUT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE DISPARATE GROUPS WHICH MAKE UP THE FRONT COULD PULL OFF SUCH A COMPLICATED MANEUVER. INDIVIDUAL OPPOSITIONISTS EXPRESS FEAR THAT THE BRIEF PERIOD OF FAIR ELECTIONS MAY BE PASSING IN PAKISTAN AND COMPLAIN ABOUT HARRASSMENT AND THE INCREASING DIFFICULTY THEY FACE IN GETTING THEIR MESSAGE TO THE PUBLIC. THE NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY HAS BEEN UNDER PARTICULARLY SEVERE ATTACK, CHARGED WITH SECESSIONIST LEANINGS AND ACCUSED OF ENGAGING IN VIOLENT ACTIVITIES. WHATEVER THE TRUTH OF THE CHARGES AND COUNTER-

CHARGES, IT FUTURE AS A RECOGNIZED AND ACCEPTED ELEMENT IN
THE LEGITIMATE POLITICAL OPPOSITION MAY BE LIMITED.

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8. THE ONLY RECENT INSTANCE OF THE OPPOSITION'S WORKING AS
A COHESIVE GROUP TO CAPITALIZE ON AN ISSUE OF SERIOUS POTENTIAL
DANGER TO THE GOVERNMENT WAS ITS ROLE IN THE AHMADIYA DIS-
TURBANCES WHICH SWEEPED THE PUNJAB IN JUNE. ALTHOUGH OUTBREAKS
CONTINUE, THE SITUATION HAS BEEN LARGELY CONTAINED. BHUTTO
HAS TO A CONSIDERABLE EXTENT DEFUSED THE ISSUE FOR THE MOMENT BY
TURNING IT OVER TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, NOW CONDUCTING
HEARINGS DESIGNED TO BRING ABOUT PASSAGE OF A RESOLUTION
ON THE STATUS OF THE HETERODOX SECT BY THE SEPTEMBER 7 DEAD-
LINE SET BY PM. BHUTTO HIMSELF DOUBTLESS DEPLORES THE SUDDEN AND
UNEXPECTED SURFACING OF AHMADIYA DISPUTE AFTER 25 QUIESCENT
YEARS AND HAS LITTLE SYMPATHY FOR DIVISIVE RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS
WHICH THE DISTURBANCES UNDERSCORED. HE IS LIKELY TO PROVIDE
"GUIDANCE" TO THE ASSEMBLY AS IT SEEKS TO FIND A FORMULA TO
DEFINE THE STATUS OF THE AHMADIYAS. HE HAS PROBABLY NOT YET MADE

UP HIS MIND ON THE MATTER BUT WE SUSPECT THAT WHEN HE DOES
SO HE WILL RECOMMEND THAT THE ASSEMBLY COME UP WITH A SOLUTION
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WHICH WILL GO SUFFICIENTLY FAR TOWARD MEETING THE DEMANDS OF
THE ORTHODOX CONSERVATIVES TO SHARPLY LIMIT THE POTENTIAL FOR
FURTHER UPHEAVAL.

9. BHUTTO'S POSITION, THEN, SEEMS SECURE IN THE SHORT RUN.
THE PRINCIPAL DANGERS WHICH ARE LIKELY TO CONFRONT HIM IN
THE LONGER TERM ARE LIKELY TO COME FROM SEVERAL DIRECTIONS.

10. THE MOST TROUBLESOME OF THESE POTENTIAL DANGERS IS ECONOMIC.
OVER TIME, CONTINUING INFLATION, LIMITED PER CAPITA GROWTH,
BALANCE OF PAYMENTS PROBLEMS, FOOD SHORTAGES, AND INCREASING
RELIANCE ON FOREIGN ASSISTANCE OF UNCERTAIN AVAILABILITY COULD
SERIOUSLY SAP THE SUPPORT BHUTTO NOW ENJOYS AMONG KEY ELEMENTS
IN THE POWER STRUCTURE. THEY COULD ALSO SET THE STAGE FOR
THE FLASH OUTBREAKS SPARKED BY VOLATILE GROUPS WHICH HAVE BEEN
SO UPSETTING TO PAKISTANI GOVERNMENTS IN THE PAST.

11. THE PRESENT OUTLOOK IS NOT BRIGHT, AND IS WORSENER AS A
RESULT OF THE DAMAGE TO THE TARBELA DAM, THE FULL EXTENT
OF WHICH WILL NOT BE KNOWN UNTIL THE RESERVOIR IS DRAINED
BY APPROXIMATELY MID SEPTEMBER. REAL GNP GROWTH WILL PROBABLY
RISE NO MORE THAN 5.3 PERCENT AS AGAINST A PREDICTED 6.1
PERCENT, MOSTLY BECAUSE THE WHEAT CROP, THOUGH MAY BE A
MILLION TONS SHORT OF FORECASTS. WITH POPULATIONS GROWING
AT AN ESTIMATED 2.9 PERCENT PACE, REAL PER CAPITA GROWTH NOW
LOOKS TO BE ONLY 2.4 PERCENT, WELL BELOW THE UN TARGET RATE.
PAKISTAN'S GNP IS BARELY KEEPING PACE WITH POPULATION GROWTH.

12. THE CONTINUED RISE IN IMPORT PRICES, PLUS DEFICIT SPENDING
AND SPIRALING WAGE SETTLEMENTS, MAKE FURTHER SUBSTANTIAL
INFLATION CERTAIN. FOR THE GOP, THE MOST IMMEDIATELY WORRI-
SOME PROBLEM IS THE OUTLOOK FOR FOOD SUPPLIES FOR LATE 1974
AND EARLY 1975, AND THE IMPACT OF THIS UPON INFLATION IT
IT CANNOT KEEP THE RATION SHOP SYSTEM SUPPLIED. THE
GOP WOULD HOPE TO IMPORT MOST OF THE MILLION TONS OF WHEAT
AND 200,000 TONS OF VEGETABLE OIL IT WILL NEED ON CONCESSIONAL
TERMS; OTHERWISE THE COUNTRY MAY HAVE TO SPEND AS MUCH AS
\$450 MILLION-- ALMOST A THIRD OF ITS ESTIMATED FOREIGN EXCHANGE
EARNINGS--ON FOOD. A CURRENT REDUCED RATE OF FERTILIZER
CONSUMPTION, DUE TO THE HIGH (GOVERNMENT-SET) RETAIL PRICES
AND DISTRIBUTION PROBLEMS MAY ALSO AFFECT ADVERSELY THE OUTCOME
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OF THE NEXT WHEAT CROP.

13. THERE IS LITTLE TO BE COMPLACENT ABOUT EITHER IN THE BALANCE-OF-PAYMENTS OR THE GOVERNMENT BUDGET. ALTHOUGH EARNINGS FROM RAW COTTON AND RICE ARE LIKELY TO IMPROVE AND YARN AND TEXTILES MAY RECOVER FROM THEIR DEPRESSION OF THE LAST QUARTER OF 1974, THE 1975 TRADE GAP IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO WIDEN. THE GOP NOW ESTIMATES THE BALANCE-OF-PAYMENTS DEFICIT AT ABOUT \$35 MILLION, EVEN AFTER TAKING INTO ACCOUNT RAPID DISBURSEMENTS FROM THE \$580 MILLION IRANIAN LOAN AND OTHER MIDEAST AID. OVERALL RECEIPTS FROM FOREIGN AID ARE LIKELY TO RISE BY 60 PERCENT, WHILE TTI DOMESTIC BUDGET PROSPECT IS FOR HEAVIER RECOURSE TO DEFICIT SPENDING.

14. ASIDE FROM THE ECONOMY, THE BALUCHISTAN SITUATION REMAINS A CONTINUING PROBLEM. WHILE IT IS EASY TO EXAGGERATE ITS IMPACT, A LONG INCONCLUSIVE CONFLICT THERE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT FORCES AND THE TRIBAL HOSTILES OBVIOUSLY WOULD HAVE ITS EFFECT ON BHUTTO'S STANDING. THE OPERATION IS ALREADY REPORTEDLY UNPOPULAR WITH THE MILITARY, WHO FEAR THAT ANY ENLARGEMENT OF THE FORCES COMMITTED TO THE COUNTER-INSURGENCY EFFORT WOULD WEAKEN PAK ABILITY TO DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST FOREIGN THREATS.

15. ALTHOUGH THE MILITARY SITUATION IN BALUCHISTAN HAS DETERIORATED IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS, THE INSURGENCY IS STILL LARGELY CONFINED TO TWO DISTRICTS. BHUTTO IS STILL SEEKING A POLITICAL SOLUTION, AND THE SITUATION HE FACES IS A COMPLEX ONE. THERE ARE ELEMENTS--"SETTLERS" FROM PUNJAB AND SIND, CULTIVATING TRIBES IN THE PAT FEEDER AREA, SMALL TRIBES IN THE HILLS--WHO HAVE A VESTED INTEREST IN ORDER AND DEVELOPMENT AND ARE THUS FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, ITS LOCAL CIVIL AND MILITARY AGENTS AND ITS PRESENT LEADER. THOSE WITH TIES TO THE KHAN OF KALAT (THE GOVERNOR), THE JAM SAHIB (THE CHIEF MINISTER) AND THE OTHER TRIBAL SARDARS WHO COMPRISE THE PRESENT PROVINCIAL MINISTRY ARE ALSO PRESUMABLY IN BHUTTO'S CORNER FOR NOW. OVER THE SHORT TERM, THE PRIME MINISTER HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO MANIPULATE THESE AND OTHER TRIBAL LEADERS WITH THE HOPE OF GAIN OR OFFICE AND THE THREAT OF JAIL; ONLY OVER THE MUCH LONGER RUN COULD HE CONCEIVABLY END-RUN THE SARDARS AND FOSTER POPULAR BACKING FOR THE PPP AS A NATIONALIST, DEVELOPMENT-ORIENTED PARTY, HIS EVENTUAL AND

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OFTER STATED GOAL. AT THE MOMENT, THE PRIMARY TASK OF THE SARDARS IN THE GOVERNMENT CAMP SEEMS TO BE TO HELP BHUTTO COME TO SOME UNDERSTANDING WITH THE OPPOSITION SARDARS IN AND OUT OF JAIL AND TO REDUCE THE LEVEL OF TRIBAL INSURGENCY. WE DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT EITHER THEIR BLANDISHMENTS OR THREATS (IN EARLY AUGUST BHUTTO GAVE THE HOSTILES UNTIL OCTOBER 15 TO ACCEPT HIS AMNESTY

OFFER) WILL LEAD TO AN EARLY SOLUTION TO THE BALUCHISTAN PROBLEM
ON THE POLITICAL PLANE AND LARGER MILITARY OPERATIONS ARE PROBAB-
LY IN THE CARDS.
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